CHAPTER IV.

AGRICULTURE[1].

Husbandmen.

According to the 1881 census returns agriculture supported about 260,000 people or sixty-one per cent of the population. The details are:

Kánara Agricultural Population, 1881.

Age.	Males.	Females.	Total.
Under Fifteen	49,279	45,480	94,759
Over Fifteen	88,644	77,494	166,138
Total ...	137,923	122,974	260,897

From the beginning of the century when British rule was introduced two classes have been connected with the land, large landholders and husbandmen. In some cases the large landholders themselves work the land. But, as a rule, men who own estates including several villages, let their lands either to permanent tenants called *mulgenigárs*, or to yearly tenants called *chálgēnigárs*, and set apart a portion of their estate to be tilled by hired labour as a home-farm.

Most of the land is in the hands of Bráhmans, who, except the Havigs and the Habbus, do not work in the fields. In the lowland sub-divisions of Kárwár and Ankola the chief landlords are Shenvis and Konkanis who rarely themselves cultivate. In Kumta Honávar and Bhatkal the proprietors usually let the land from year to year, and are hard and exacting landlords taking from the yearly tenants at least as much as half of the whole produce.[2] Besides Havig and Habbu Bráhmans the chief landholding classes are Sárasvat and Konkani Bráhmans and Naváiyat Musalmáns. Sárasvats are employed in Government service or other literate pursuits and do not cultivate. Naváiyats are large cloth and timber merchants who travel a good deal and make much money. As on religious grounds they scruple to lend money they invest their savings in land which they let to tenants and spend much capital in improving their estates. In Sirsi Siddápur and Yellápur the land is almost entirely in the hands of Havigs, with a few Konkanis, Shenvis, and Lingáyats. Though they realise large incomes from their properties the landowners of Sirsi, especially in Yellápur, labour under many

[1] From materials supplied by Messrs. A. R. Macdonald, C.S., and R. E. Candy, C.S. Rev. Sur. Rep. 168 of 21st February 1871.

Chapter IV. Agriculture.

Husbandmen.

disadvantages. They live in most feverish places, labour is scarce and has to be highly paid, and the outlay of capital is considerable. Their gardens yield large profits but not out of proportion to the great labour which is bestowed on them. The owners of gardens are generally Havig or Haig Bráhmans who bring labour from the coast and live in their gardens all the year. They are the best cultivators in Kánara and give the country its special character. They hate change, and are frugal, sober, and hardworking. Their strongly built houses generally stand in a spice garden surrounded by a thicket of brushwood whose leaves supply excellent manure.[1] In Mundgod and Supa, which border on Dhárwár and Belgaum and have few of the features of Kánara proper, much of the land is in the hands of Lingáyats, Musalmáns, Deshasth and Shenvi Bráhmans, Maratha Kunbis or Árers among whom are some families of Desáis. Within the last ten years much of Kánara has been surveyed and settled on the Bombay revenue survey system. All the surveyed lands have been divided into fields or survey numbers which are grouped into holdings or *khátás*. As the rents of these small plots of land are now fixed they can be easily transferred, and already many of the larger estates have been broken into a number of moderate holdings.

Of landholders who till with their own hands the chief classes are Habbu Bráhmans, Halepáiks, Komárpáiks, Bhandáris, Panchamsális, Konkan Kunbis, Nádors, Konkan Maráthás, Árers, Musalmáns, and Christians. Of these, Habbus, numbering about 250 and classed as Bráhmans, are found chiefly in Kárwár. Halepáiks, numbering about 43,000, are found in Honávar and Bhatkal and in the uplands. They are an important class of proprietors, permanent tenants, and yearly tenants or field-workers. Their chief employment is growing rice, though some of the poor are palm-tappers. They are a well-made good-looking people, fond of drink and pleasure, their favourite amusement being attending fairs and cock-fights. They rear fowls and take them for sale to the market towns. Their houses are strongly built with roofs of thatch, and in front of all of them is an open well-swept court with a basil altar. The Komárpáiks, who number about 8700, are a strong well-made race, found in Kárwár, Ankola, and Kumta. Before the English conquered Kánara the Komárpáiks were employed by the chiefs and large landlords as fighting men, sword-bearers, and retainers. Those who distinguished themselves as swordsmen gained the title of *mehtris* or masters which some families still keep as a surname. In the decline of the chiefs' power many Komárpáiks formed themselves into bands and lived by plunder and highway robbery. The establishment of order under the English forced them to take to tillage, but some of the old love of plunder still lingers among them. Most of them are tenants or field-workers, and in Kumta many are cotton carriers. Their favourite employments are drinking, cock-fighting, and attending fairs. Bhandáris, who number about 9800 and are found almost entirely on the coast, are bad husbandmen, preferring to earn their livin

[illegible]

[1] Rev. Com. S. D.'s letter [illegible] of 21st April 1880

Chapter IV. Agriculture. Husbandmen.

as palm-tappers, liquor contractors' servants, and shopkeepers. Their condition is middling; as a rule they are free from debt. Panchamsális, numbering about 2000, are found only in the uplands and chiefly in Sirsi and Siddápur. Some of them are large landholders, a trace of the time when Bilgi was ruled by a Lingáyat chief. In Mundgod and Haliyál there are many Lingáyat husbandmen, who as a class are hardworking, frugal, and sober. They do not differ in essential points from the Lingáyats of the neighbouring parts of Dhárwár. Konkan Kunbis (14,800), Nádors (600), and Konkan Maráthás (3000), many of whom are *vargdárs* or proprietors, are found both in upland and in lowland Kánara. Above the Sahyádris they grow rice, sugarcane, and *rági*. The Nádors are much like Deccan Mális, growing vegetables and selling them in the large towns. They are well nourished and fair, and live in well-built houses, which above the Sahyádris are thatched, but in the Kálinadi valley and other lowlands are often tiled. Their women are much like Bráhman women in their style of dress and ornament. They are hardworking, orderly, and thrifty. In some places they are landowners, but the bulk of them are permanent tenants. Of Árers there are about 17,000. They are found mostly among the Sahyádris and were formerly much given to *kumri* or hill tillage; most of them are now yearly tenants. They are poor but generally free from debt. They are a simple frugal people, very ignorant except in matters connected with woodcraft and sport. They are fearless in beating the forests for big game, and are adepts at tracking and hunting the bison. They are also much used as carriers and road-workers. Their houses are small and simple and their worldly goods are few. Besides these Hindu husbandmen, there are about 5000 Musalmán and about 3000 Christian landlords. In lowland Kánara the Musalmáns are generally lazy and often in debt and their lands mortgaged. They think it beneath them to hold the plough and know nothing of husbandry. In upland Kánara, in Mundgod and Supa, some Musalmáns till their own fields, but not so successfully as Hindus. They are neither hardworking nor thrifty, and spend much on marriages and other ceremonies. The Christians, with few exceptions, are found along the coast. They are skilful husbandmen, but as a rule are tenants and field-workers, rearing pigs and fowls and keeping milch cattle. The men are much given to drink and are lazy and thriftless. The women help in the field and work as labourers. Above the Sahyádris are a few Goanese labourers and a class of Christian Sidis who are husbandmen and work in the Yellápur saw-mills and as foresters.

Of husbandmen who were formerly serfs or rural bondsmen, Devlis about 3200 found in Kárwár, Ankola, Kumta, Honávar and Bhatkal, till lands attached to temples and are employed as temple-servants. Their women work in the fields, perform menial temple services, and [illegible] prostitutes. Above the Sahyádris a similar class of Kaobers are found at Banavási, Mage, and Sirsi. Padtis about 2900, and Devdigs about 3600, are tenants-at-will or hired labourers who work in rice fields and betel gardens. Besides these there are two early and closely similar tribes, Kare Vakkals about 10,000 and Kot Vakkals numbering about 2000.

Chapter IV. Agriculture.

Husbandmen.

They are known by the generic name of Gaudgalus and besides the two main divisions include Gám Vakkals and Hálvakki Vakkals. They are found in the lowlands between Ankola and Bhatkal, and also above the Sahyádris. The men are strong, thrifty, sober, and hardworking. Most of them are day-labourers, but many work as yearly tenants, the landlords being careful not to allow them to remain more than five years on one plot of ground lest they should claim a tenant's right. The women work in the fields and are largely employed in bringing head-loads of grass and firewood from the forests into towns and villages. They are dark and ill-featured, wearing no bodice, and with many chains of beads hanging from the neck over the breasts. From an ornament worn under the chin the robe falls between the breasts half hiding them, and is fixed round the waist hanging in folds over the legs. The hair is twisted into a coil which is worn on the left side of the back of the head, and above the coil a flower of the *kyadigi huvu*, Pandanus odoratissimus, is stuck like a pin. In the hill villages above the Sahyádris Kare Vakkals are found as landowners. Kot Vakkals are labourers in spice gardens. Holayars or Mhárs are few and degraded. They are much given to drink and show no signs of improving. They are labourers or tenants-at-will.

Stock.

All large landholders own bullocks and if necessary lend them to their tenants. Cows of a very small breed are numerous, and buffaloes are sometimes kept. Little or no care is given to cattle-breeding. In lowland Kánara carts are few and the cattle are small and weak. The ploughs are small and the manure is mostly dead leaves with a little straw and cowdung. With rich soil, abundant rainfall, and hardworking husbandmen the outturn would be greater were the tillage less rough, the ploughing less shallow, and the manure less scanty. Above the Sahyádris there are more and better cattle, but owing to the feverish climate the people are sluggish and weakly. The husbandmen do not export the produce of their fields. Dealers come to their farms with pack-bullocks and buy the produce. Sirsi is the centre of the cardamom and betelnut trade, and field and garden produce and spices are exported from Honávar and Kumta. The cultivating classes are well-to-do. The produce commands a fair price and the Government assessment is moderate. The relations between the landlords tenants and labourers are friendly.

Soil.

Below the Sahyádris the arable land consists partly of sandy plains along the sea-shore and the banks of rivers, and partly of narrow valleys among the hills, most of them watered by unfailing streams. The sandy soil called *malalu* or *usutri* is generally poor and much broken by salt-water creeks. The soil in the upper slopes of the valleys is called *betta*, a hard earth made of crumbled iron clay or laterite, which if not constantly worked stiffens into clods and stifles growth. At the upper ends of the valleys a red alluvial soil called *kagdali* [illegible] is found. Further down the valley, as the hills begin to draw back, a black loose sandy earth called *gajini* occurs, apparently of vegetable origin, and near the mouth of the valleys is a still richer soil called [illegible]. The chief products of the sandy plains are rice,

Soil.

cocoa-palms, and betel-palms. Along the coast and on some of the creeks is a valuable sandy or alluvial soil known as *pulan* or *shitta*. It is often covered with drift sand, but when the sand is cleared the loam yields excellent rice, the richest cocoa-palms, and fine cashewnut, and *undi* trees Calophyllum inophyllum.

Above the Sahyádris, except where the underlying iron clay rises to the surface, the soil is good. The best called *kagdali* is a red mould containing very small stones. In some places the soil is a stiff moisture-holding clay. Besides garden land, rice land or *tori* and dry-crop land or *kushki* are found. Rice land, as a rule, yields only one crop which is grown either with or without watering. In some parts much of the rice land yields two rice crops or a crop of rice and an after-growth of pulse. Sugarcane is grown once in three years, fine fields being often seen up the Gangávali valley. The supply of water is the main difference between good and bad rice land. Above the Sahyádris very little water is stored. The ponds are few and small, and the rice depends on the rainfall either on the field itself or on rain water brought from the uplands by small ditches. Most of the well-watered valleys that cross the forests and many level plots of excellent soil lie waste and timber-covered from want of husbandmen and from the sickliness of the air.

Spice Gardens.

Above the Sahyádris garden crops are the staple produce of the west and rice of the east. The coast gardens are very unlike the usual garden tillage in Dhárwár or in the Kánara villages that border on Dhárwár. In the inland parts, as a rule, garden crops are grown only round wells and ponds. But along the coast, if only care and skill are given to it, almost all of the rice land will yield garden crops. Much of the coast land which is assessed as garden land had originally nothing either in soil or in position specially suited for the growth of garden crops. On the coast most of the garden land is given to cocoa-palms, whose proper culture requires much care and skill. A little inland the cocoa-palm is often mixed with the *supári* or betel-palm. Further inland in the valleys at the foot of the Sahyádris and on their lower slopes are the rich palm and spice gardens, which are the special glory of Kánara. Except in Supa in the north, where the gardens are poor, without cardamoms or betel vines, with few cocoa or betel palms, and with plantains as the staple produce, these spice gardens are wonderfully rich and are managed with great skill.[1] They vary in area from a fifth of an acre to ten acres, and may be roughly estimated to average about one acre. Their shape depends on the form of the valley. As a rule they are long and narrow, hid among hills thick with evergreen forests, in deep shady dells watered by a network of runnels. They are guarded by high banks or by a thick belt of forest timber and brushwood. Within the belt is a strong fence and within the fence a second ring of mangoes, jacks, limes, plantains, cocoa-palms, oranges, citrons, pomeloes, apples, *rands* Garcinia purpurea, *otambs* Artocarpus lakoocha, and other

[1] Rev. Survey 451, 8th May 1880. Bom. Gov. Rev. Rec. 879 of 1880.